

RECORD OF MONTHLY MEETING

Ashtead Wing

Record of meeting by Zoom on 10th May 2021

The Presidents welcomed 39 Members and 2 Guests and our speaker to the meeting.

Joint President Sarah Minister welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the speaker Sarah Slater. Sarah Slater is a tour guide at Hampton Court Palace and is an Affiliate of the Institute of Tourist Guiding. She has worked at Hampton Court Palace for 13 years and is a founding member of the Ottershaw Night Owls WI. Her talk is entitled “The Ghosts of Hampton Court”

Sarah was dressed in the costume that she wears when she is presenting the Ghost Tour at the Palace as she enjoys the excitement of walking down the staircase towards the awaiting group dressed in her black Victorian mourning gown complete with veil. However no veil was worn for tonight’s talk on zoom. Sarah makes all her own dresses and explained how the dress was constructed so that a person was able to carry the weight of the bustle at the back and that a middle or upper class woman would wear all black for two years and one day after the death of her husband. Sarah gives a number of different tours at the Palace “The Rooftop Tour” being her favourite as it takes members of the public to places that they usually cannot access.

She started her talk with a quick history of the Palace and what was meant by ghostly activity and then went on to explain possible origins of the “ghosts” that haunt the Palace.

Hampton Court Palace is situated on the River Thames midway between Windsor and London and was built in 1515 by Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. He gave it to Henry VIII as a gift when he fell from the King’s favour as he was unable to secure King Henry a divorce from his wife. His next wife Queen Anne Boleyn then extended the Palace. However much of the Palace was destroyed when King William III decided to rebuild it in a style intended to rival the Palace of Versailles in the 17th Century so the Palace has two distinct architectural styles.

Before talking about the ghosts of Hampton Court Sarah talked about the two types of ghostly activity recorded at Hampton Court Palace. The first being ghostly activity when an apparition of a dead person or a lost soul of a person is seen. These are thought to be people who have died and have not moved into the light either because they do not believe that they are dead or do not want to be judged. The Victorians produced photographs to back up the claims of ghostly hauntings.

The second is Residual Haunting also called Stone Tape Theory. Emotional or traumatic events can somehow be recorded into the fabric of a building or object and then played back and noticed by a sensitive or psychic person. These events may frighten the living or give a feeling of calm.

The stories of ghostly sightings come from a variety of people over the centuries and include sightings of Queen Anne Boleyn in apartment 18 when Lady Olave Baden Powell held a séance to the HR manager in 2001 having her handbag thrown across the room. Plus the story of the Grey Lady who was said to haunt the South West Wing, apartment 39 after the tomb of Sibel Penn was disturbed in the rebuilding of St Mary’s Parish Church.

So are the sightings of happenings or bizarre events at the Palace ghostly hauntings or tricks of the eye and mind? 34% of people surveyed believed in ghosts and those that believed were more likely to have experienced an unexplained occurrence than those that didn't.

Joint President Sarah Minister thanked Sarah Slater for her fascinating talk and members shared their experiences of visiting Hampton Court Palace and other old buildings where they noticed unexplained phenomena.

The National Federation of Women's Institutes NFWI has asked each branch to approve their Annual Report. Joint President Sally Knipe asked the members if they agreed to the committee reviewing the document and making a decision. With a show of hands the majority of the members agreed to this decision with no-body dissenting.

Joint President Sally Knipe then gave a presentation about the only WI Resolution this year "A call to increase awareness of the subtle signs of ovarian cancer" This presentation can be found on the My WI website. (https://www.thewi.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/527932/Briefing-a-call-to-increase-awareness-of-the-subtle-signs-of-ovarian-cancer.pdf)

There will be a talk on Zoom on Thursday 8th April 2021 Tickets £3
(<https://surreyfedwi.org.uk/ovarian-cancer-a-briefing-for-the-2021-resolution/>)

Deadline for voting is 9th July 2021

Members then discussed the presentation and shared personal experiences about ovarian cancer and how it affected their family and friends.

Liz Phillips and Helen Jones have stepped forward and volunteered to co-ordinate the Arts and Craft Group.

Members then had an opportunity to talk in small breakout groups

The meeting closed at approximately 21.45 pm.
Signed as a true record of the meeting

Joint Presidents.....

Date